UNITED
NATIONS

E

Economic and Social
Council

Distr.
LIMITED

E/ECE(52)/L.1
18 April 1997

ORIGINAL : ENGLISH

ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE

Fifty-second session
(Agenda item 5(a))

SUBJECT: Endorsement of ECE Recommendation 25, "Use of the UN/EDIFACT Standard (ECE/TRADE/207) for Endorsement by ECOSOC as an International UN Recommendation

ACTION TO BE TAKEN: Decision

PROPOSED BY: The Committee for the Development of Trade

The Commission decides to:

1. Endorse the September 1996 decision of the Working Party on Facilitation of International Trade Procedures, now known as the Centre for Facilitation of Procedures and Practices in Administration, Commerce and Transport (CEFACT), as found in TRADE/WP.4/197, paragraph 48, as well as the December 1996 decision of the Committee on the Development of Trade (ECE/TRADE/210, para. 23), endorsing ECE Recommendation 25, "Use of the UN/EDIFACT Standard" (ECE/TRADE/207) and recommending that ECOSOC adopt it as an international UN Recommendation;

2. Recommend that the Economic and Social Council endorse ECE/TRADE/207 as an international UN Recommendation.

GE.97-21163

Background Note to Commission Decision on
ECE Recommendation 25

UN Electronic Data Interchange for Administration, Commerce and Transport (UN/EDIFACT) is the only international standard for Electonic Data Interchange and is supported by a Memorandum of Understanding with the ISO. The development and maintenance of the Standard is done by around 1,500 technical experts whose input is managed by Regional UN/EDIFACT Boards (Asia, Australia/New Zealand, Central and Eastern Europe, Pan America and Western Europe with plans to revive the African Board). In addition ECE/EDIFACT has been endorsed for use by a number of important international organizations such as the World Customs Organization (WCO), the International Air Transport Association (IATA), the Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunication (S.W.I.F.T.) and the International Article Numbering Association (EAN). It is estimated that over 100,000 private and public organizations have implemented the Standard.

However, in some countries outside the region governments have hesitated to adopt for their own use a purely ECE Recommendation. Therefore, the Working Party on Facilitation of International Trade Procedures, now known as the Centre for Facilitation of Procedures and Practices in Administration, Commerce and Transport (CEFACT), had been asked to request the endorsement of Recommendation 25 on the use of UN/EDIFACT by delegations and technical experts coming from outside the ECE region as well as by a number of international organizations. They believe that such an ECOSOC Recommendation would be a valuable tool for promoting the implementation of UN/EDIFACT by their governments, thus bringing governmental practices more in line with those of the private sector.